News release

Emergency Planners on 'Amber Alert'

26 September 2005

A prolonged, severe winter is one of the biggest threats to the efficient day-to-day running of the country. With this in mind, the Met Office has given advanced warning to many of its customers and partners to plan for a 'colder-than-average winter'. Using a traffic light analogy, the organisation has written to contingency planners in the Government — including the NHS and Highways Agency — and in the energy industry, as well as many others to put them on Amber Alert.

Our daily lives are inextricably linked to the weather — from the ease of travelling to and from work, to the health of individuals with certain conditions or the efficiency and demands on the UK energy industry. It is critically important that planners are aware of long-term forecasts issued by the Met Office and are able to act on the information.

Since 1995-96, winters in the UK have been mild, giving many the impression that mild winters are now the norm. Even an average winter could come as a surprise to many, although at this stage, it is not possible to issue specific details about a particular day, or location, over the winter season.

The long-range forecast also signals a dry winter across much of the UK. A cautious approach needs to be taken at the moment, but, bearing in mind the lack of rain for the UK over the last 12 months, this factor may be more significant in the long run.

UK climate averages

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